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POLAND-USSR: Political Gestures

The Polish regime intends to release some internees and abolish curfew regulations this week

Estimates of the number to be freed range from several hundred to several dozens. A high-level official of the Church reportedly commented that the government hopes that these steps will allow the traditional May Day activities to be held in an atmosphere of calm.

Meanwhile, a senior Polish official has claimed that the USSR continues to support Premier Jaruzelski and believes that martial law will have to continue until civic discipline and the previous level of labor productivity are restored. The official stated that Stefan Olszowski, leader of Poland's hardline Communists, was disappointed by Moscow's attitude. Olszowski had hoped that his popularity with some Soviet leaders and the Soviets' desire for an early return to civilian rule would improve his chances to succeed Jaruzelski.

Comment: Warsaw's planned steps are symbolic gestures intended to encourage Western governments to abolish sanctions and do not represent a serious effort by the martial law authorities to establish a domestic dialogue. The senior leadership of Solidarity, including Lech Walesa, will not be released, and those union members who are will be subject to immediate arrest if they attempt any political activities. Although some isolated disturbances on May Day are possible, the celebrations probably will be tightly controlled and ignored by most Poles.

Soviet leaders evidently recognize the obstacles to restoring civilian rule, regardless of its ideological desirability. Their willingness to take such a pragmatic approach would reduce the likelihood of disagreement between the current Polish and Soviet leaderships.

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28 April 1982

Approved for Release
Date AUG 1999